

Comments: The World History CA Curriculum Framework

Focus period: Modern History of Iran

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Why the new content is needed to be edited?

It is commendable to include a brief account of one of the most important early episodes in the entanglements of the US in the Middle East, particularly with one of the most consequential regional powers Iran. But the brief statement included contains two errors, one of characterization and one of analysis. (1) The characterization of the government of Prime Minister Mossadegh as “socialist-leaning” is grossly off the mark: neither Mossadegh himself, a stalwart aristocrat with a Doctorate in Law from Switzerland, nor his cabinet were “socialist-leaning.” Christopher de Bellaigue, a reporter for the financial magazine, The Economist, and the author of Patriot of Persia: Muhammad Mossadegh and a Tragic Anglo-American Coup (2012), characterizes him as a “democrat and a patriot” and compares him with “a Lincoln, or a Jefferson or a George Washington.” Others have called Mossadegh “champion of secular democracy.” If anything, he was excessively democratic and liberal, which allowed his enemies to wage a campaign of misinformation and breed chaos to topple his government. If we compare him with yet another US president, FDR, he was most clearly to the right of him in his economic views. If the insertion of “socialist-leaning” is an attempt at alluding to a probable cause for the Anglo-American coup, then that is also patently incorrect. Even if one does not dispute the US concerns with USSR getting a foothold in Iran as a contributing ideological factor in the coup (a contention disputed by the highly regarded scholar of the subject Ervand Abrahamian, the author The 1953 Coup in Iran, 2013), still no serious student of the subject, including Stephen Kinser, author of the All The Shah's Men (2008) or Mark Gasiorowski, the author of Mohammad Mossadegh and the 1953 Coup in Iran (2004) blame anything like Mossadegh's government leaning socialist as a probable cause for the coup. (2) As to the second error, the speculation that the 1953 coup “would lead (much later) to the first and second Gulf Wars” is at best open to misunderstanding and is at worst too far flung for pre-college students. Iran was a bystander in

the two Gulf Wars; it was Iraq that had to face the wrath and the might of US and her allies. And although many often confuse the names of these two neighboring countries, it makes better sense, and is more plausible and easier to argue that the coup “would lead (much later) to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, rise of Islamism in the Middle East, and a host of current tensions in the region.”

Original comments plus highlighted changes.

Page 546; lines 903-905

American foreign policy in the Middle East included CIA involvement in overthrowing the democratically elected but **socialist-leaning** government in Iran, and the tensions that would **lead** (much later) to the first and second Gulf Wars.

After receiving his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1985, Ali Ferdowsi studied as a post-doctoral fellow in the Graduate Program in Demography at UC Berkeley, where he also conducted seminars on Iranian history and literature. He taught for three years as a visiting professor in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies at Tokyo University in Japan. After working for five years as an International Specialist for NHK (Japan Broadcast Corporation), he returned to US in 1997 and almost immediately began teaching in the Department of History and Political Science at Notre Dame de Namur University in which he is currently a full professor. He is a regular contributor to Iranian intellectual and literary magazines. His latest book *Fashioning a Self by Trotting the Globe: The 1875 Travel Journal of Hajj Sayyah, the First Iranian-American in the US* is now in press.